



Suarez, Marta F (2019) New transnationalisms in contemporary Latin American cinemas, by Dolores Tierney, 1st edition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, xiv + 282 pp., ISBN 978 0 7486 4573 2 (Hardback) £75, ISBN 9781474431132 (Paperback) £19.99, ISBN 978 1 4744 3112 5 (ePub) £24.99. Transnational Screens, 10 (3). pp. 233-235. ISSN 2578-5273

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/625808/>

Version: Accepted Version

Publisher: Informa UK Limited

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/25785273.2019.1663045>

Please cite the published version

<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk>

New Transnationalisms in Contemporary Latin American Cinemas, Dolores Tierney, (2018)
1st edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, xiv + 282 pages
ISBN 978 0 7486 4573 2 (Hardback) £75
ISBN 9781474431132 (Paperback) £19.99
ISBN 978 1 4744 3112 5 (ePub) £24.99

Review by Marta F Suarez, Liverpool John Moores University

This is an insightful book that explores the cinema of six key Latin American filmmakers: Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alfonso Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro, Fernando Meirelles, Walter Salles and Juan José Campanella. The chapters are informed by preliminary sections on Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, which establish the impact that sources of funding, tax reliefs, distribution strategies and political changes had on their transnational status.

There are four key themes running throughout the chapters. Firstly, Dolores Tierney addresses productions that are considered “national” and those considered “international”. By doing so, Tierney is able to uncover a thread of common themes and aesthetics across productions, and also establish how the transnational operates across the filmmakers’ work. Secondly, by including films in English alongside films in Spanish, the book is able to put in dialogue scholarship in area studies that were previously disconnected. Thirdly, Tierney pays attention not only to “auteur” films, but also to films commissioned for commercial purposes to explore how their aesthetic strategies and their political concerns connect to their auteurist style. Finally, the book pays special attention to how popular genres, often dismissed in scholarship, are disrupted to convey political and ideological meanings not connected to the hegemonic Hollywood genre. This is a key point throughout the chapters.

The first section on Mexican cinema is the most extensive and explores in great depth questions of funding, distribution, audiences and production. By doing so, the argument clearly demonstrates the way in which the financial circumstances at the time of production forced these directors to explore alternative sources outside the nation of origin. This discussion informs the debate on their transnational work and shows a progression between their first productions and later films. The Iñárritu chapter has dedicated sections for *Amores Perros* (2000), *21 Grams* (2003), *Babel* (2006) and, *Biutiful* (2010). Similarly, the Cuarón chapter focuses on *Sólo con tu pareja* (1991), *Y tu mamá también* (2001) and *Children of Men* (2006). Del Toro’s chapter discusses *Cronos* (1993), *El espinazo del diablo* (2001) and *El laberinto del fauno* (2006).

The second section, centred on Brazilian cinema, includes a preliminary introduction that discusses an increase in audience numbers and its impact on film production. Additional funding from television companies, the televisualisation of cinema, and big subsidiaries for production inform a discussion on the desire to compete globally and to create a sustainable industry. The next two chapters discuss the productions of Meirelles and Salles, with dedicated sections on *Cidade de Deus* (2002), *The Constant Gardener* (2005), *Blindness* (2008), *Diários de Motocicleta* (2004) and *On the Road* (2012). These sections discuss at length the use of Hollywood codes in relation to the political potential of the genre film. In relation to Meirelles, the analysis dismisses criticism regarding either the spectacularisation of violence and savagery (*Cidade de Deus*, *Blindness*) or the white saviour complex (*The*

Constant Gardener), to instead connect his production with the Cinema Novo and the narrative anti-colonial elements. The chapter on Salles engages critically with the political potential of the road movie, a genre that is disrupted in these films to bring notions of temporality and modernity not aligned with common conventions of the genre.

The next section on Argentinian cinema, discusses Campanella's work, particularly *El secreto de sus ojos* (2009). The analysis engages with the criticism that the film attracted after winning the Academy Award, particularly in relation to the aspects of melodrama and commercial style. In opposition to this criticism, Tierney discusses how the structure and aesthetics of the film address issues of memory and justice that connect directly with the Argentinean period of production.

The final section of the book is an epilogue that analyses the more contemporary films of the Mexican directors: *Gravity* (Cuarón, 2013), *Birdman* (Iñárritu, 2014), *The Revenant* (Iñárritu, 2015) and *Crimson Peak* (Del Toro, 2015). The compilation of these films' analysis at the end aims to explore whether the influence of Hollywood in their more recent films compromises their auteurist style and ideological themes. The discussion concludes that despite Hollywood's involvement in these films, they still embody auteurist elements that destabilise popular conventions of the genre and decentralise narratives of US hegemony. Whilst these analyses could have easily been incorporated in each of the chapters related to the Mexican authors, by bringing them together in the epilogue, Tierney is able to emphasise the common trends within these productions and reflect on transnational filmmaking within Hollywood industries.

Overall, this book provides a remarkable in-depth discussion of the abovementioned filmmakers, with a focus on issues of production, funding, auteurism and the use of popular genres. Whilst three of the seven chapters engage with the Mexican filmmakers, the author is able to provide an overview of the issues surrounding other Latin American countries, including Peru which is covered in the introduction through an overview of the social, cultural and economic national contexts, as well as brief references to other filmmakers and countries. Dolores Tierney signposts the reader often, making this book very approachable for students of film. It complements Debora Shaw's *The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón* (2013) by engaging further with aspects of production and distribution, establishing parallels in this sense with Nuria Triana Toribio's *Spanish Film Cultures* (2016). It elaborates on issues discussed in Stephanie Dennison's edited book *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film* (2013) and work by Natália Pinazza on road movies, Latin America and Brazil (2013, 2018, 2019). An excellent read for scholars of transnational and Latin American cinema.

[907 words]